LOUISIANA COASTAL AREA
BENEFICIAL USE OF DREDGED MATERIAL PROGRAM

SUPPLEMENTAL
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
SCOPING REPORT

13 November 2006

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Introduction

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 established a nationwide policy requiring an environmental analysis of impacts as a result of proposed major Federal actions affecting the environment. A Notice of Intent to prepare a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) Beneficial Use of Dredge Material Program, Louisiana was published in the Federal Register (Volume 71, Number 126) on June 30, 2006 (http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html).

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) New Orleans District (MVN), and the local sponsors, the Louisiana Department Natural Resources are working together to prepare the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Scoping Process

The scoping process is designed to provide an early and open means of determining the scope of issues (problems, needs, and opportunities) to be identified and addressed in the draft EIS. Scoping is the process used to: a) identify the affected public and agency concerns; b) facilitate an efficient draft EIS preparation process; c) define the issues and alternatives that will be examined in detail in the draft EIS; and d) save time in the overall process by helping to ensure that the draft statement adequately addresses relevant issues. Scoping is a process, not an event, or a meeting; it continues throughout the draft EIS process and may involve meetings, telephone conversations, and/or written comments. Scoping is a critical component of the overall public involvement program. An intensive public involvement program will be initiated and maintained throughout the study to solicit input from affected Federal, state, and local agencies, Indian tribes, and interested private organizations and individuals. This scoping report represents and summarizes the scoping comments expressed at the public scoping meetings, as well as written comments received during the comment period ending October 14, 2006. Scoping meeting public notices were mailed to interested parties in August 2006. The public notice provided three questions as a means of focusing the public's comments and concerns related to the proposed project:

1. What are the critical natural and human environmental problems and needs that should be addressed in the EIS?

2. What are the important resources that impact the natural and human environment?

3. What are the reasonable restoration alternatives that should be considered in the EIS?

Five public scoping meetings were held across coastal Louisiana in early September:

Wednesday, 6 September, 2006 – Morgan City Auditorium
Thursday 7 September, 2006 – Lake Charles Civic Auditorium
Monday 11 September, 2006 – University of New Orleans, Lindy Boggs Building
Tuesday 12 September, 2006 – Larose Civic Center
Wednesday 13 September, 2006 – Houma Municipal Auditorium

All scoping meeting participants who requested to be on the study mailing list, as well as those people who provided written comments, will be included on the study mailing list and will receive copies of this scoping report.

Study Authority

The programmatic study of the Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Program Study, as described in the LCA Study, is being conducted under the authority provided to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) through resolutions adopted by the Committees on Public Works of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, dated 19 April 1967 and 19 October 1967, respectively. These resolutions requested a review of prior Corps reports to determine the advisability of improvements or modifications to existing improvements in the coastal area of Louisiana in the interest of hurricane protection, prevention of saltwater intrusion, preservation of fish and wildlife, prevention of erosion, and related water resources purposes. These resolutions contain the following language:

> "RESOLVED BY THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE, That the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors created under Section 3 of the River and Harbor Act approved June 13, 1902, be, and is hereby requested to review the reports of the Chief of Engineers on the Mermentau River and Tributaries and Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and connecting waters, Louisiana, published as Senate Document Numbered 231, Seventy-ninth Congress, on the Bayou Teche, Teche-Vermilion Waterway and Vermilion River, Louisiana, published as Senate Document Numbered 93, Seventy-seventh Congress, on the Calcasieu River salt water barrier, Louisiana, published as House Document Numbered 582, Eighty-seventh Congress, and on Bayous Terrebonne, Petit Caillou, Grand Caillou, DuLarge, and connecting channels, Louisiana, and the Atchafalaya River, Morgan City to the Gulf of Mexico, published as House Document Numbered 583, Eighty-seventh Congress, and other pertinent reports including that on Bayou Lafourche and Lafourche-Jump Waterway, Louisiana, published as House Document Numbered 112, Eighty-sixth Congress, with a view to determine the advisability of improvements or modifications to existing improvements in the coastal area of Louisiana in the interest of hurricane protection, prevention of saltwater intrusion, preservation of fish and wildlife, prevention of erosion, and related water resource purposes."

Purpose and Need

The LCA Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Program will optimize the use of dredged material resulting from the maintenance of federally maintained navigational channels to 1) restore formerly existing coastal wetlands; 2) reduce, halt or reverse the loss of existing coastal wetlands; 3) create coastal wetlands where none existed previously; or 4) provide protection to any of the above wetland situations or other coastal landscape features within the study placement area. The LCA Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Program costs are those costs incurred above and beyond the ordinary costs incurred with USACE Operations and Maintenance (O&M) dredging and disposal operations in accordance with their established base plan for maintenance dredging activities. The base plan is determined by applying the Federal Standard which requires maintenance dredging and disposal activities to be conducted in the most cost effective, environmentally acceptable manner. The study area is Louisiana's coastal area from Mississippi to Texas. Louisiana parishes within in the study area include Ascension, Assumption, Calcasieu, Cameron, Iberia, Jefferson, Lafourche, Livingston, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Martin, St. Mary, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, and Vermilion. The following seven navigation channels represent an initial list of areas with the most significant opportunities

1) Calcasieu River and Pass;
2) Houma Navigation Canal;
3) Atchafalaya River and Bayous Chene, Boeuf, and Black;
4) Bayou Lafourche;
5) Mississippi River and Tributaries Project, Head of Passes and Southwest Pass;
6) Barataria Bay Waterway; and
7) Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (although this channel is not currently funded for O&M dredging).

Alternatives

Alternatives recommended for consideration presently include the No Action plan, to use dredged materials only within the current federal standard which is not necessarily for beneficial use. Within each channel, alternative marsh creation or nourishment sites would be examined to maximize the environmental benefits, environmental need, and the engineering required to get the material to the site. Also, unlike Section 204, Beneficial Uses of Dredged Material, of the Continuing Authorities Program, the LCA Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Program would allow site preparation (such as construction of retention dikes) in anticipation of a future (i.e., 1 - 3 years out) dredging cycle.

Comments

Approximately 93 people attended one of the five evening meetings with 29 people providing oral comments. Thirty written comments were received during a 35-day comment period. The comments fell into ten general categories:

- Shorelines
- Reef / Barrier Islands
- Marshes / Wetlands

- Ridges
- Soils / Geology
- Hydrology
- Monitor / Coordinate
- Dredging concerns in general
- Construction
- Miscellaneous / multiple categories

The majority of the comments received expressed concern for restoring barrier islands as one of the higher priorities. Restoration of marshes / coastal wetlands was the topic that received the second most comments. Numerous sites were nominated for the Calcasieu and Barataria shipping channels. Many of the sites nominated have also been nominated as potential CWPPRA (Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act) sites. The transcripts of the comments received at the meetings and copies of written comments can be found in Attachment 1. Oral scoping comments (Table 1) and Written comments (Table 2) were consolidated and sorted into categories in order to more efficiently address issues of concern about the scope of the proposed project and evaluation of impacts in the draft EIS. Each table also provides the sections where the comments may be discussed further in the draft EIS.

Several issues were identified that are not recommended to be analyzed in the EIS. These issues may be addressed in the cumulative effects or in other NEPA documents; or are activities that extend beyond the project scope.

- Environmental impacts of dredging
- Impacts of navigation channels
- Dedicated dredging – dredging for the express purpose of creating material
- Fresh water flows down various Bayous
- Projects not yet authorized or constructed, but may be under study
- Construction of hurricane levees
- Use hurricane debris or other materials to fill canals

Table 1: Consolidated comments and location in the DEIS that they will be discussed
Oral Comments from Scoping Meetings

Location in the EIS:
PN – Purpose and Need **Alt** – Alternatives **AE** – Affected Environment **EC** – Environmental Consequences **CC** – Consultation and Coordination **M** – Mitigation **CI** – Cumulative Impacts

Location in EIS							Comments
PN	**Alt**	**AE**	**EC**	**CC**	**M**	**CI**	
			Shorelines				
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	Use material for shoreline stabilization, specifically along the waterfront near Morgan City
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	If nearshore dumping continues, at least place material on the west side of the channel so that it will be caught up in the littoral current
			Reef / Barrier Islands				
	x						Restore Weeks Island
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	Use material for reef restoration, Atchafalaya Bay area
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	Use material to restore/reestablish barrier islands in Terrebonne Parish
	x						**Use material to restore barrier islands***
	x						Use material to restore barrier islands, in particular Isles Dernieres to Wine Island
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	Use material to close Cat Island Pass
			Marshes / Wetlands				
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	Restore the Biloxi marshes and wetlands west of Lake Warren, continuing eastwards to the St. Tammany wetlands.
			x		**x**		Plant new created/restored marshes with appropriate species to prevent erosion
	x						Restore wetlands east of the Mermentau River
	x						Use material to restore the coastal wetlands
	x						Use material to restore wetlands in Terrebonne Parish
			Ridges				
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	**Use material to restore coastal ridges***
	x						Use materials to restore ridges, including plantings
			Soils / Geology				
		x			**x**		Use similar soil types so the biota isn't affected by placement of dredge materials
		x	**x**			**x**	Consider the possibility of contaminants, especially in the Calcasieu ship channel
			Hydrology				
		x	**x**				Consider hydrology and geology when placing materials
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	Consider salt / fresh water sources. Don't place salty fill in sweet (fresh) water areas
			Monitor / Coordinate				
x				**x**			Consistency among programs, think Big

* Indicates an issue raised by multiple individuals

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Location in EIS							Comments
PN	Alt	AE	EC	CC	M	CI	
				x			Coordinate within the Corps and with other agencies
				x			Monitor created/restored areas
				x			Make sure land owners have reasonable understanding of the project that will be taking place on their land.
				x			Secure land rights, easements, oyster leases
Dredging general							
x							Use as much dredge material beneficially as possible
	x						Harvest sediments that accumulate in point bars and depositional sites.
	x						Permanent slurry dredge delivery system from the Mississippi River.
	x						Use funding to off-set the cost of using smaller bucket dredges instead of hydraulic dredges
Construction							
	x						Degrade construction dikes after marsh creation
		x	x				Vegetate areas after placement of fill materials
	x	x					Stock pile sediment for later use if no project is ready in the immediate area.
	x						Build permanent infrastructure to convey dredge materials closer to areas of need. Long distance transport.
			x				Build containment for projects; keep material from slumping back into the channel.
Miscellaneous / multiple categories							
	x						Use the Illinois (Lake Peoria) material for even more restoration projects
	x						No ocean disposal
	x					x	Use dredge materials from the future Port of Iberia deepening
x							Increase freshwater flow down Bayou Lafourche
	x		x			x	Consider landscape features that would reduce the impacts of storm surge.
x							Keep the beneficial use program ongoing to offset land loss
	x		x				Set project priorities to areas need, not based on proximity to the dredging source

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Table 2: Consolidated comments and location in the DEIS that they will be discussed Comments received by mail, fax, or e-mail							
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Location in EIS							**Comments**
PN	**Alt**	**AE**	**EC**	**CC**	**M**	**CI**	
Shorelines							
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	**Use material for Bank stabilization***
	x						Use material for shoreline/marsh restoration Timbalier Bay, Lafourche Parish
	x						Stabilize retreating bankline of the HNC and restore marshes behind the bankline
	x						Repair and reclaim eroding banklines along the Atchafalaya River and Bayous Chene, Boeuf, and Black.
	x						Reinforce river banks along the Atchafalaya River (and Bayous Chene, Boeuf, and Black) to prevent further erosion.
	x						Restore bankline and marshes along Tiger Pass
	x						Continue to expand the West Bay disposal area
	x						Reestablish eastern bank line of Freshwater Bayou and restore marshes west of the bayou.
							Restore fragmented fringe marshes in Barataria Bay
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	Materials excavated from bar channels should be placed west of that channel and as near to the Gulf shoreline as practical.
	x						Repair/restore eastern shoreline of Lake Salvador at Jean Lafitte National Park south of Bayou Villars
Reef / Barrier Islands							
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	**Use material for restoration of Barrier Islands ***
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	Use material to restore Point au Fer shell reef
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	Use material for Barrier Island restoration, Isles Dernieres, Terrebonne Bay
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	Use material for Barrier Island restoration: Errol, Grand Grossier, and Curlew Islands.
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	Use material for Barrier Island restoration, Chandeliers
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	**Use material for Barrier Island restoration, Timbalier Island***
	x						Restore or build barrier islands to the magnitude of the Palm Islands, United Arab Emirates
	x						Use material to continue restoration of Wine Island
	x	**x**	**x**				Use material to restore back marshes in the Isles Dernieres barrier island chain.
	x						Restore barrier islands in Timbalier Bay
	x						Create / nourish marshes in Avoca Island

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Location in EIS							Comments
PN	**Alt**	**AE**	**EC**	**CC**	**M**	**CI**	
	x						Rebuild Point au Fer Island
	x						Restore East Grand Terre Island
	x						Continue rebuilding marshes on Fifi Island
	x	**x**	**x**				Nourish back barrier marsh on barrier islands, especially Isles Dernieres, East, Trinity, and Timbalier Islands
	x						Use material to restore barrier island and coastal marshes adjacent to West Belle Pass (Port Fourchon Navigation Channel)
	x						Restore coastal islands in Barataria Bay (Mendicant, Queen Bess, Bassa Bassa, Dutch, and Grand Terre Islands).
Marshes / Wetlands							
	x						Use material for marsh/wetlands restoration, in particular south of Bayou Penchant, Terrebonne Parish
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	Use material for marsh restoration, Bay Tartellon (east of Port Fourchon), Lafourche Parish
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	**Use material for marsh restoration, east and west of Houma Navigation Canal***
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	**Use material for marsh restoration, in the vicinity of the Avoca Island disposal area***
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	Restore marsh in the vicinity of Rigolets Canal and Rigolets/Sawmill Passes, Orleans Parish
	x	**x**	**x**			**x**	**Use material for wetland restoration/nourishment***
	x		**x**				**Restore wetlands to an elevation that will allow the restoration of coastal forests***
		x	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**	Protect created/restored marshes from being destroyed (oil canals dug through it).
	x						Calcasieu area: marsh restoration on approximately 140 acres near shore and intertidal marsh (Geer/Tolbert properties).
	x						Calcasieu area: habitat restoration and bank protection in West Calcasieu Lake, approximately 220 acres
	x						Calcasieu area: marsh restoration in the Black Lake area (Dr. Hinton property), approximately 220 acres.
	x						Use material to create marsh on Sabine NWR
	x						Use material to create marsh on Cameron Prairie NWR
	x						Use material to restore marsh on Cameron Parish School Board property east of Brown's Lake (640 acres)

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Location in EIS							**Comments**
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	x						Restore marsh in the Lockport (Bayou D'Inde) oil and gas field area
	x						Restore marsh south of Falgout Canal
	x						Restore marsh on the Harry Bourge Corp. property (adjacent to Houma Navigation Canal (HNC))
	x						Restore fragmented marshes at the edge of Terrebonne Bay
	x						Mine upland disposal area for the HNC and create marsh in open water areas in the vicinity
	x						Use material for marsh nourishment in the northern areas of the HNC
	x						Use material to nourish broken marsh areas north and east of Port Fourchon.
	x						Use material to nourish marsh east of Bayou Lafourche, including areas such as Bay L'Ours, East Pointe au Chein WMA, east side of Catfish Lake, Leeville Oil fields, and west side of LaHwy 1.
	x						Restore marshes on Delta National Wildlife Refuge
	x						Nourish marshes surrounding Lost Lake and Lake Mechant (Terrebonne Parish)
	x						Create marsh in the open-water areas of the Penchant Basin, near and east of Turtle Bayou and/or along or near the banks of the GIWW.
	x						Restore marsh on the isthmus between Bayous Perot and Rigoletes
	x						Restore marsh in the oil and gas field between Dupre Cut and Bayou DuPont (Jefferson Parish), south and east of "The Pen"
	x						Restore marsh east and west of Mermentau Pass
	x						Restore marsh at the head of Calcasieu Lake, Calcasieu Parish
	x						Marsh restoration in the vicinity of Marcello Canal and LaBranche Canal
	x						Restore marsh in the vicinity of Bay Dogris (Jefferson Parish)
	x						Restore marsh in the vicinity of Mud Lake (Jefferson Parish)

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	x						Restore marsh in the vicinity of the Jonathan Davis Wetlands (NW of the Pen).
Ridges							
	x		**x**				Plant trees on restored ridges
	x	**x**	**x**				Create high enough land to re-establish coastal cypress forests.
	x						Ridge restoration along Bayou DuPont
	x						Restore Bayou Barataria Ridge
Soils / Geology							
		x					Placement sites should be prioritized based on geologic sustainability.
		x				**x**	Screen dredge materials for contaminants according to standards.
Hydrology							
	x						Open Violet Canal and Caernarvon diversion fully for as much fresh water as possible
			x			**x**	Does dredging channels for navigation exacerbate the saltwater intrusion problem?
			x			**x**	Does dredging channels for navigation exacerbate the effects of storm surge?
			x				Disposal areas in emerging deltas should be designed to better mimic natural delta splay and allow for a semblance of natural flow patterns.
		x	**x**				Consider hydrology and geology when placing materials
Monitor / Coordinate							
				x			Maintain improved areas so they aren't lost again
				x			Purchase conservation easements on disposal areas
				x			Have right-of-way secured in advance, so when dredge material is available (such as emergency operations), entry into disposal areas will ensure beneficial use
			x				Consider impacts to commercial and recreational fishing (Oysters, shrimp, and fin fish)
		x	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**	**Protect beneficial use areas from destruction by private concerns***
		x	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**	Protect cypress and other tress from logging
				x			Be aware of private property rights, work with private property owners
	x			**x**			Disposal areas mentioned in the Port of Iberia EIS

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	x			**x**			Coordinate this project with Calcasieu Ship Channel Dredge Spoil Plan
					x		Periodic monitoring of protective structures (rocks) and disposal areas should be conducted.
				x	**x**		Coordinate with LDWF to avoid or minimize impacts to oyster seedbeds.
				x	**x**		Coordinate with LDWF for impacts to oyster leases and leaseholders.
Dredging general							
x				**x**			Perform dedicated dredging year-round
				x			On any canal maintenance or creation project, use material beneficially instead of creating "spoil banks".
x							Dredge only publicly owned water bottoms
	x						Use all dredge material beneficially
x						**x**	Environmental impacts of dredging
x							Impacts of navigation canals.
Construction							
	x						Utilize Katrina debris to fill MRGO (instead of placing in a dump)
	x						**Fill all non-used pipeline canals***
			x	**x**		**x**	Contain beneficial use disposal areas so the material will not flow back into canals or other areas it isn't wanted.
	x		**x**		**x**		Use raw sewage as fertilizer for restored wetlands
	x		**x**				Use kudzu vine to hold soil together on restored areas
		x	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**	Containment dikes should be designed and constructed to degrade after dewatering to maximize fishery access. If a dike fails to degrade, then there should be provisions to be breached.
		x	**x**	**x**	**x**	**x**	Created marsh should be designed to avoid continuous tracks of unbroken tracts of marsh. Sites should be designed to maximize the amounts of marsh edge.
		x	**x**		**x**	**x**	Temporary work areas and discharge pipe rights-of-way should be aligned and designed to minimize impacts to natural and created wetlands.
		x	**x**				Channels or trenasses should be built into created wetlands to provide acreage of protected heterogeneous habitats.
		x	**x**				A variety of intertidal habitats should be included in

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							construction planning.
		x	**x**				Disposal sites should be designed to allow a cell to be completely filled in a single dredging cycle so that the newly created habitat will not be continually disturbed by additional cycles.
		x	**x**	**x**		**x**	Limit final elevations of disposal sites
		x					Dredged materials should be used to enhance the structural integrity of structures located in the channels.
	x						Use old military equipment (ships, tanks) to fill the MRGO, and stabilize Lake Borgne shoreline
		x			**x**		Place rock armoring along channel banklines, but should include gaps for natural bayou openings, fisheries access, and tidal exchange.
Miscellaneous / multiple categories							
x							Build hurricane levees to the same size as Mississippi River Levees
x							Be cost effective
x					**x**		Define “Beneficial Use”
x				**x**			Review nationally the incremental cost per cubic yard of beneficial use of dredge programs
x							How does this project compare to other federally funded projects (Section 204, 205, 206, 207, 210, 503, and Harbor Maintenance Fund).
	x		**x**				Consider coastal loss rates as the top priority when choosing sites for beneficial use
			x			**x**	No longer use open ocean disposal for dredge materials
		x	**x**			**x**	Prioritization should be based on repairing the lowest habitat value first; i.e., based on the most favorable ecological efficacy.
		x				**x**	Cumulative impacts and consistency of design, construction, operation, and maintenance of all navigation channels and disposal areas should be fully evaluated.
x				**x**			The BUDMAT program should allow for funding sources other than state or federal (additional local sponsors).
x							Are the depths and widths of dredged channels still necessary?